

The Maryland Crabmeat Company packinghouse, currently Crabs R' Us, is a utilitarian concrete block structure erected in 1969 on the harbor in the section of the city known as "Brooklyn."

The location of many packinghouses since the land was bulkheaded and filled with shell around 1910, the former Maryland Crabmeat Company stands adjacent to the J.C.W. Tawes packinghouse. The flat roofed architectural forms of the Maryland Crabmeat building are common to the third quarter of the twentieth century.

In 1904 Gordon E. Milbourne and his brother Woodland Milbourne established the Milbourn Oyster Company in Crisfield. They later purchased the Hickman and Sterling Oyster Company. In 1918 the company sent daily shipments to British Columbia, Spokane, Washington and San Francisco and Pasadena, California. In the 1920s Gordon's son Morris became a partner, and by World War II, Gordon and Morris were full owners of the business. In 1945 Gordon's son-in-law, Ira Howard, became a partner. Long-time employee, J. Loren Sterling was made a partner as well that year upon his return from combat duty during the war. Ira Howard and J. Loren Sterling gradually purchased the Milbourne's shares and the Maryland Crabmeat Company was incorporated in Crisfield in 1957 with Ira R. Howard, president, J. Loren Sterling, secretary-treasurer, and William B. Maddox, Jr., vice-president and manager. The company began business in a building on Crisfield's waterfront. In the mid 1960s the corporation bought property in the Brooklyn section of Crisfield's harbor, old buildings on the property were demolished, and a modern plant was built on the site. It opened in 1969.

In 1973 the company produced fresh and pasteurized crabmeat, fresh and frozen soft crabs, and steamed and hard crabs. In 1977 there were 42 employees, 8 men and 34 women, and in 1983 there were 45 employees processing crabmeat and soft and hard crabs.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. S-508

### 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Maryland Crabmeat Company  
other \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street and number 911 Spruce Street not for publication  
city, town Crisfield vicinity \_\_\_\_\_  
county Somerset

### 3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Crabs R' Us  
street and number 911 Spruce Street telephone 410-968-1012  
city, town Crisfield state Maryland zip code 21817

### 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Somerset County Clerk of Court liber 198 folio 368  
city, town Princess Anne tax map 102 tax parcel 173 tax ID number 7-119852

### 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District  
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER  
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<u>      </u>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<u>      </u>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<u>      </u>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> government		
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry		
		<input type="checkbox"/> landscape		
		<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture		
		<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
		<input type="checkbox"/> social		
		<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress		
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		
		<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use		
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:		
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory	
			<u>      </u>	

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## 7. Description

Inventory No. S-508

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### Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

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Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Maryland Crabmeat Company, currently known as Crabs R' Us, is located at 911 Spruce Street in the historic commercial district known as Brooklyn in Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland. The concrete block packing house is located along the entrance to the city harbor with a wooden bulkhead along its south boundary.

Built in 1969, the single-story concrete block packinghouse is an asymmetrically laid out structure with a long picking room that comprises the heart of the structure. The south side of the main block features a tall two-story, rectangular concrete block wing that currently houses shedding tanks. The south wall is pierced by a pair of three-pane metal clad windows frames that light the first floor. The upper wall surface is uninterrupted. The concrete wall rises to a flat roof covered with metal with a pair of metal vents rising atop the roof. The east and west walls of the shedding tank room are pierced by wide door openings with sliding doors. The east side of the shedding tank section is sheltered by a single story shed roofed porch.

The southwest side of the main building, adjacent to two-story shedding tank section, is a single-story wall that rises to a parapet covered with tile caps. Two window openings have been boarded up.

The west side of the picking room is defined by five concrete block buttresses, and the wall section between the buttresses are pierced by a variety of window openings, some of which have been boarded up.

The north wall of the packinghouse rises to a parapet with a tile covering. The wall surface is pierced by a double door opening and two single door openings to the east. A mid twentieth-century mobile home stands off the northwest corner of the building and is used as an office.

The east side of the packing house is defined by an assortment of frame additions with shed roofs.

Inside the concrete block packinghouse plain concrete block walls rises to open beam ceilings with steel I-beams supporting the roof system. The floors are poured concrete. Aside from a 1916 Continental Can Company canning machine, the rooms have been cleared of the typical packinghouse furniture and equipment; which was donated to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. The interior of the taller section has interior concrete block buttresses that support the concrete block walls, which rise to an open beam ceiling under the metal roof. The two-story section currently houses a set of shedding tanks.

## 8. Significance

Inventory No. S-508

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

Specific dates

Architect/Builder

Construction dates 1969

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The Maryland Crabmeat Company packinghouse, currently Crabs R' Us, is a utilitarian concrete block structure erected on the harbor in the section of city known as 'Brooklyn.' The location of many packinghouses since the land was filled with oyster shell around 1910, the former Maryland Crabmeat Company stands adjacent to the J.C.W. Tawes packinghouse. The flat roofed architectural forms of the Maryland Crabmeat buildings are common to the third quarter of the twentieth century.

### HISTORY AND SUPPORT

In 1904 Gordon E. Milbourne and his brother Woodland Milbourne established the Milbourne Oyster Company in Crisfield. They later purchased the Hickman and Sterling oyster company. In 1918 the company sent daily shipments to British Columbia, Spokane, Washington and San Francisco and Pasadena, California. In the 1920s Gordon's son Morris became a partner, and by World War II, Gordon and Morris were full owners of the business. In 1945 Gordon's son-in-law, Ira Howard, became a partner. Long-time employee J. Loren Sterling was made a partner as well that year upon his return from combat duty during the war.<sup>1</sup> Ira Howard and J. Loren Sterling gradually purchased the Milbourne's shares and the Maryland Crabmeat Company was incorporated in Crisfield, Maryland in March 1957 with Ira R. Howard, president, J. Loren Sterling, secretary-treasurer, and William B. Maddox, Jr., vice-president and manager.<sup>2</sup> They packed fresh, frozen and pasteurized crabmeat, soft and hard crabs, and snow crabs under the brand name "My Maryland."

The company began business in a building on Crisfield's waterfront. In the mid 1960s the corporation bought property in the Brooklyn section of Crisfield's harbor, old buildings on the property were demolished, and a modern plant was built on the site. It opened in 1969. Loren Sterling and Ira Howard also owned crab plants in Cedar Key, Florida, and McClellanville, South Carolina, with partners from Philadelphia and Cambridge, Maryland. In the early 1970s the company purchased the property of the C. M. Woolston Company on West Main Street which was used for frozen soft-shell crab processing. The company also had a packing house at George Island Landing near Stockton in Worcester County where they bought and planted oysters and picked crabs.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Woodrow T. Wilson, "Lest We Forget: Gordon E. Milbourne (1877-1950)," *Crisfield Times*, December 29, 1978.

<sup>2</sup> Woodrow T. Wilson, *Crisfield, Maryland 1676-1976*, Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1977, p. 469.

<sup>3</sup> Woodrow T. Wilson, *Crisfield, Maryland 1676-1976*, Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1977, p. 469.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Name Maryland Crabmeat Company  
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

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In 1965 the company employed 32 people, 7 men and 25 women, processing crabmeat.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Maddox resigned in November 1969, and he was replaced by Charles K. Howard, brother of Ira Howard. Mr. Charles Howard began as manager of the company and was eventually elected vice-president. His wife, Fay T. Howard, became the bookkeeper and office manager.<sup>5</sup>

Ira Howard worked with Clayton Brooks, Calvert Tolley, J. Loren Sterling, and Theodore E. Ranke to develop and patent the Quik Pik machine to process crabs mechanically.

In 1973 the company produced fresh and pasteurized crabmeat, fresh and frozen soft crabs, and steamed and seasoned hard crabs.<sup>6</sup> In 1977 there were 42 employees, 8 men and 34 women, and in 1983 there were 45 employees processing crabmeat and soft and hard crabs.<sup>7</sup> In the late 1980s the company supplied customers in Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, as well as other packinghouses at Kent Narrows and in Crisfield.

Tim Howard began working at Maryland Crabmeat in 1978. By 1991 he was president, and the crabmeat business was suffering from low prices and lack of demand due a recession.<sup>8</sup> In the late 1990s the company processed and packed Tyson Frozen Chinese Snow Crab Meat. Picking snow crab was difficult but had the advantage of being available year-round. The company employed 40 people in 2000.<sup>9</sup>

The company was closed and the contents given to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in 2001. It is now occupied by Crabs R' Us, a wholesale crab dealer.

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<sup>4</sup> *Department of Maryland Manufacturers 1965-1966*, Maryland Department of Economic Development, p. 235.

<sup>5</sup> Woodrow T. Wilson, *Crisfield, Maryland 1676-1976*, Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1977, p. 469.

<sup>6</sup> *Directory of Maryland Manufacturers 1973-1974*, Maryland Department of Economic and Community Development, eight edition, p. 349.

<sup>7</sup> *Directory of Maryland Manufacturers, 1977-1978*, Maryland Department of Economic and Community Development, p. 221; *Directory of Maryland Manufacturers, 1977-1978*, Maryland Department of Economic and Community Development, p. 295.

<sup>8</sup> Eddie Curlett, "Officials See Economic Impact On Crisfield's Sagging Seafood Trade," *The Daily Times*, Salisbury, Maryland, June 28, 1991, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> *2000 Maryland/DC Manufacturers Directory*, p. 368.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. S-508

Name Maryland Crabmeat Company  
**Continuation Sheet**

Number 8 Page 2

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Crabs R' US  
(Maryland Crabmeat Company)  
911 Spruce Street  
Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland  
Chain of title

Map 102, Parcel 173

198/368 Isaac T. Tyler and Carrie W. Tyler

to

3/3/1960 Maryland Crab Meat Company

Plat 8/13/1945, W. Ballard Miles, 132/218

132/218 Lorie C. Quinn, Katie Quinn, Bank of Crisfield

to

8/23/1945 Isaac T. Tyler

To the said Lorie C. Quinn

1. from John W. Cox and wife, 45/154
2. from Annie Milligan and others, 45/151
3. from Thomas Dixon and others, 57/26
4. from Julia F. Atkinson, 62/246

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Inventory No. S-508

Somerset County Land Records, various volumes, Somerset County Courthouse.

(For a full listing of the resources consulted see footnotes)

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of surveyed property .48 acre

Acreage of historical setting .48 acre

Quadrangle name Crisfield, Maryland

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The historic metes and bounds of this property are coincidental with the current boundary of the lot.

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## 11. Form Prepared by

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name/title	Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian, and Virginia Jenkins, Business Historian, CBMM		
organization	Private Consultants	date	1/23/2002
street & number	P. O. Box 5	telephone	410-651-1094
city or town	Westover	state	Maryland 21871

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
DHCD/DHCP  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
410-514-7600



Y. Y. PHIL. & NORFOLK R. R.

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2 Ship Chandler	
2 Gro.	

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FERTILIZER  
W. NO. 2

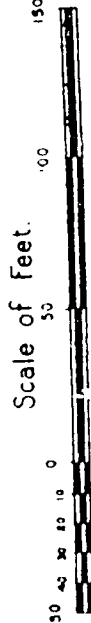
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WOODEN DRAW BRIDGE

Cove

Somers

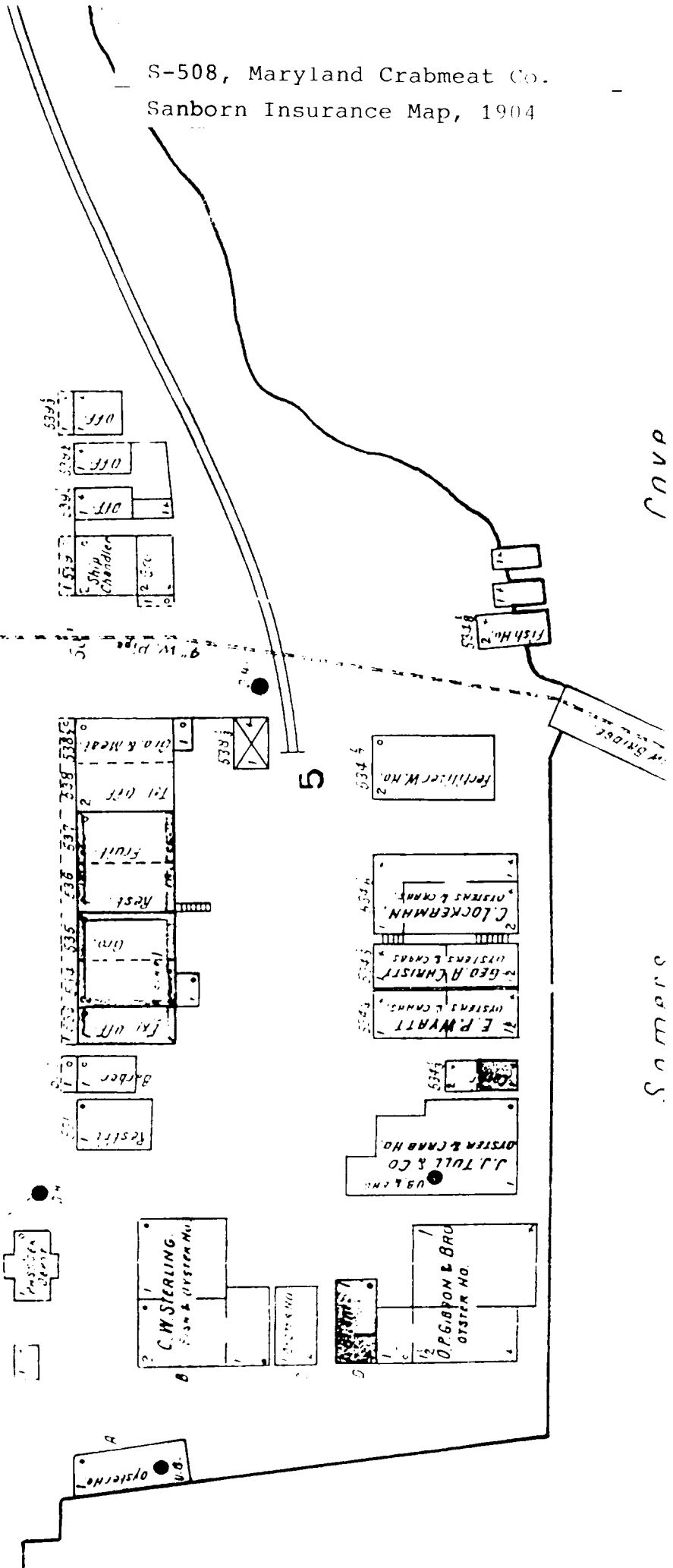
S-508, Maryland Crabmeat Co.  
Sanborn Insurance Map, 1897



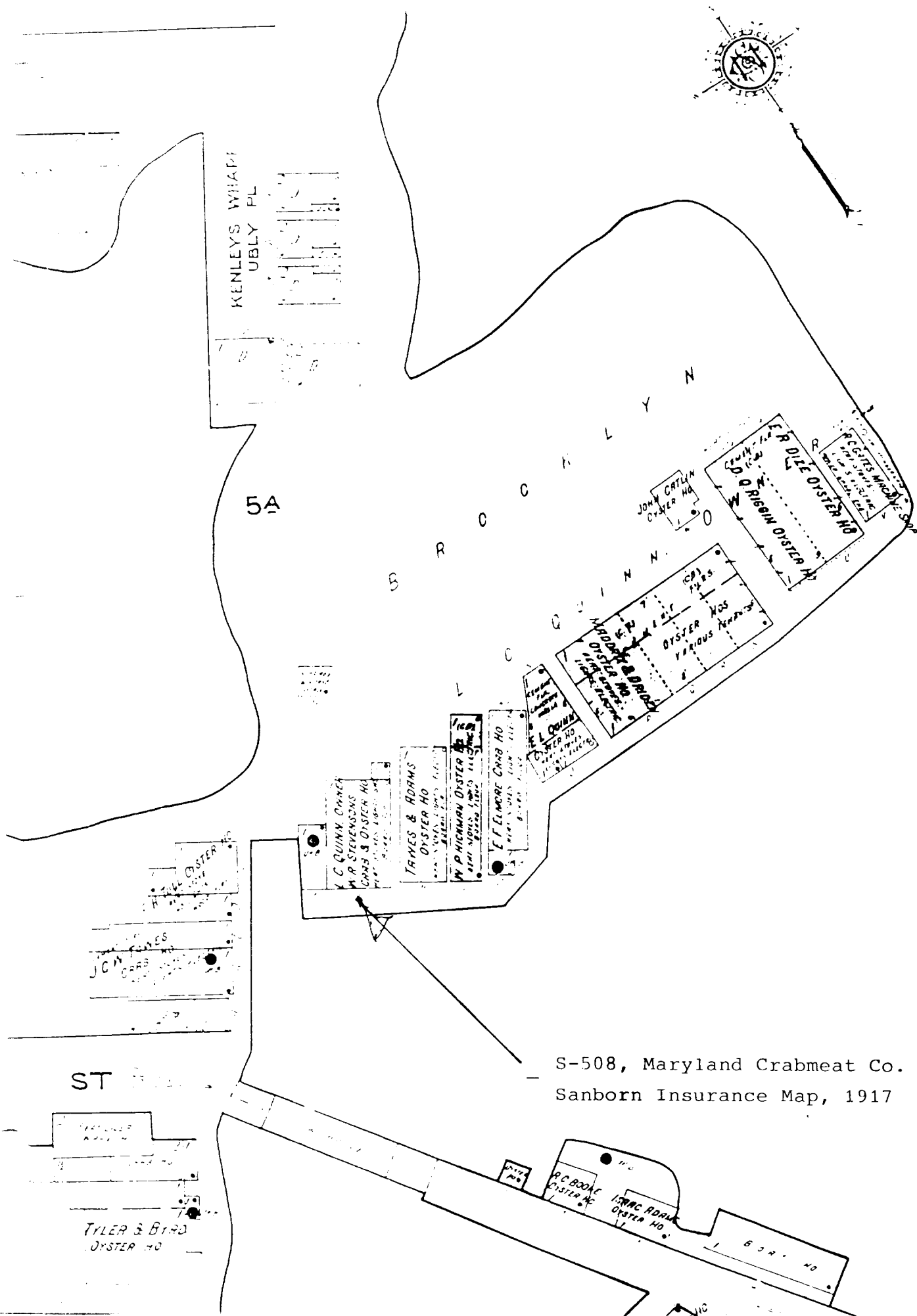


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5. 10. 1950

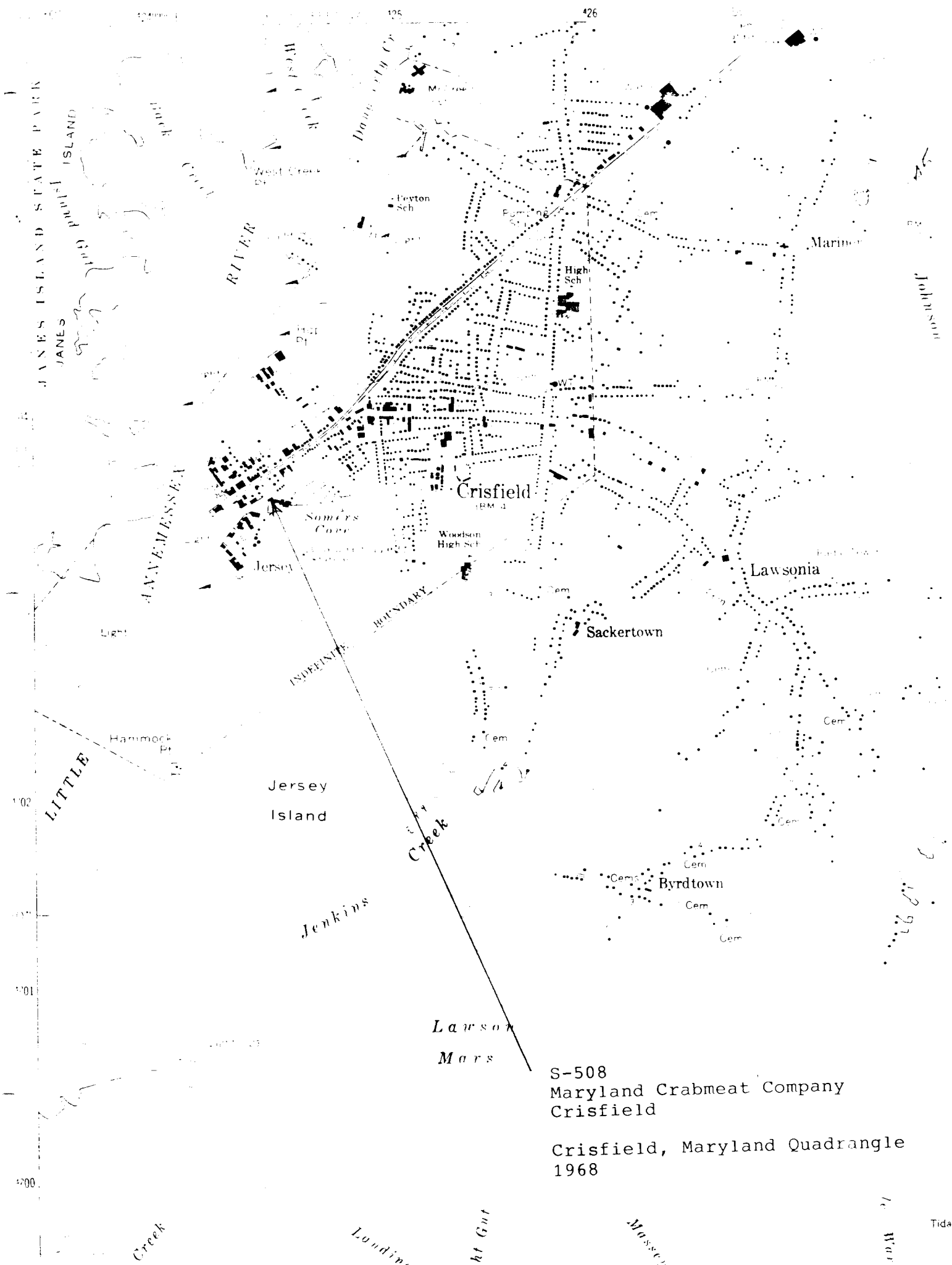






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S-508  
Maryland Crabmeat Company  
Crisfield  
  
Crisfield, Maryland Quadrangle  
1968



S-508

MARYLAND CARABMENT CO.

CRISFIELD, SOMERSET CO., MD

SOUTH ELEVATION

1/2002, PAUL TORANT, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEZ./MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

1 OF 8





S-508

MARYLAND CRABMENT CO.

CRISTHERA, SOMERSET A., MD.

SOUTHWEST ELEVATION

1/2002, PAUL TOWNST, PHOTOGRAPHIC

NEZ / MD HISTORICAL TRUST

2 UK 8



S-508

MARYLAND CRABMEAT CO.  
CRISHERS, SOMERSET CO., MD.

SOUTHWEST ELEVATION

1/2002, PAUL TOWART, PHOTOGRAPHER  
NEB./MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

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S-508

MARYLAND CERRILLAR CO.  
CRISFIELD, SOMERSET C., MD.  
NEST ENTRANCE

1/2002, Paul Tonnai, PHOTOGRAPHIC  
NEB / MD HISTORICAL TRUST

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S-508

MARYLAND CRABMEAT CO.

CRISFIELD, SOMERSET CO. MD.

NORTH ENTRANCE

1/2002, PAUL TOLART, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEZ/MD HISTORICAL TRUST

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S-508

MARYLAND CRABMEAT CO.  
CRISFIELD, SOMERSET CO., MD.  
SOUTHWEST ELEVATION

1/2002, PAUL TOWNSET, PHOTOGRAPHER  
NEZ./MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

6 OF 8



S-508

MARYLAND CRASHEAT Co.

CRASHEAT, SOMERSET Co. MD.

INTERIOR - CARBON PLATES

1/2002, PAUL TONNET, PHOTO.

NEE/MO. HISTORICAL TRUST

7 OF 8



3-508

MARYLAND CHARMENT CO.

CRISTHERN, SOMERSET CO., MD.

INTERIOR - SITTING TABLE

1/2002, PAUL TOUANT, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEL./MD. HISTORICAL TRUST.

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